The PULPIT

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DECEMBER 1942

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Contributed by Readers of THE PULPIT

'The Light of the World'

The high altar of worship in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, was destroyed, but I wonder whether that picture of Holman Hunt's, "The Light of the World," is still there, on one of the pillars that supports that house of God. Through a narrow window I saw the shaft of light from heaven illumine the countenance of Jesus, who stood outside the closed door, lamp in hand, waiting for it to be opened from within. The face in the original painting surpassed most copies. There was a look of endurance through suffering, of understanding of life's meaning, of spiritual glory that transcends death and destruction. In this time, when physical change takes place, thieves break through and steal, moth and rust corrupt; when death takes physical bodies and war changes national sovereignties, one can still feel the heart of the Eternal as one looks upon the face of the Christ, and we cry, "Oh, thou who changest not, abide with me."—*Chester F. Wood, Bethany Baptist Church, Skowkegan, Maine.*

Break Down Race Barriers—Or Else

There recently appeared in the magazine section of the *New York Times* a revealing article by Pearl S. Buck. She says some hard things about race superiority as found in America and elsewhere. "The main barrier between East and West today," she says, "is that the white man is not willing to give up his superiority and the colored man is no longer willing to endure his inferiority. So long as white men in America will not sit in the same car with colored men, so long as in India a drop of Indian blood makes a man colored and not white, so long as being Chinese makes it impossible for a sailor to get shore leave in the port of New York, then we must conclude that race does matter more than anything else."

Mrs. Buck then raises the question whether this barrier of race can be destroyed, and this is her answer: "If it cannot, then we must prepare for a future of nothing but struggle and war on a stupendous scale, particularly for the white man. We shall have to make up for our inferiority in numbers by military preparation of the most barbarous and savage kind. We must prepare super-weapons, we must not shrink from chemical warfare on a mass scale, we must be willing to destroy all civilization, even our own, in order to keep down the colored peoples who are so vastly our superior in numbers and our equal in skills. Is this a future which any human being wants to face?"—*Franklin I. Sheeder, Professor of Religion, Ursinus College.*

Bedlam Out of Bethlehem

It is unbelievable that men could take a word like Bethlehem, so glorious and beautiful, and make out of it a synonym for confusion and disorder. Yet this is what has happened. St. Mary of Bethlehem was founded as a hospital in England in 1247. Two centuries later it was turned into a hospital for the insane. The noise and confusion of that institution became known throughout the country. The original name, through contraction and corruption, was changed to Bedlam.

There is little in a name, and if there were no more here than the corruption of a word we would be unconcerned. In many ways we make bedlam out of Bethlehem. The Christmas season itself has become, not a time of quiet thought and meditation and spiritual joy, but one of worldly greed and noise. The frantic pushing through mobs in last-minute Christmas buying; the carousing on Christmas Eve; the inordinate eating and drinking on Christmas Day—these are not in concord with the message of Christmas. We have made bedlam out of Bethlehem.—*Jack Anderson, Trinity Methodist Church, Tallahassee, Fla.*

'The Old, Old Story'

A few years ago Dr. George A. Buttrick, author of the great new book on prayer, was vacationing in Michigan. An ardent trout fisherman, one day he was fishing up a new stream in late afternoon. He was tired and as he waded around a bend in the brook there came the sound of the singing of old hymns. Somewhat curious, he crossed the stream, found a barn whence came the singing and entered the door. There he found a group of farm people sitting on rude planks, facing their leader and singing with heart and soul the old hymns of the church. Between the hymns they arose, one by one, and told simply of what the good Lord had done for them. After a while the leader turned to the stranger in their midst and asked him whether he did not have a word for them. "And so," said Dr. Buttrick, "in that little old country barn, surrounded by those humble people—with my fishing rod in one hand and my creel over my shoulder—I stood up and tried, the best I knew how, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love."—*Robert F. Fillmore, Methodist Church, Corinth, N. Y.*

Christ is the Key To Final Victory

Those who have read Kennedy's "The Terrible Meek" will remember that scene where the mother of Jesus is standing with a Roman soldier under the shadow of Calvary. The captain is talking to the mother as they stand there and is confessing with shame what he and his fellows are doing—murdering, destroying. The mother asks plaintively, "What makes them do it?" The captain replies: "They want money; they want power; they want kingdoms; they want to possess the earth." And the mother, thinking of her son hanging there on the cross, replies: "And they have won. They have it." But the captain answers in a flash of insight: "Have they? Not while your son hangs there."—*W. J. McCullough, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Schenectady, N. Y.*

Bubble, Bomb or Egg?

Several years ago E. Stanley Jones addressed an audience in Canton, China, on the subject, "Is Life Shaped Like a Bubble, a Bomb or an Egg?" "Is it," he asked, "shaped like a bubble with nothingness at its heart? Or is it shaped like a bomb with force at its heart? Or is it shaped like an egg with infinite possibilities at its heart?" When Dr. Jones asked, "Is it shaped like a bomb? Is the last word with compulsion and might?" a German in the group became so excited that he leaped to his feet and cried, "No! No!" "Why not?" he was asked, "Because," said the German, "a bomb has no germ of life in it. It can tear down and explode, but it cannot put anything together. It has no seeds of the future in it." God intends that each life shall have the "seeds of the future" in it. They are the seeds of an ever expanding freedom and a growing brotherhood. Our business as Christians is plainly that of nourishing these seeds.—*Alan Jenkins, First Congregational Church, Elkhart, Ind.*

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The Pulpit

CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON, *Editor*

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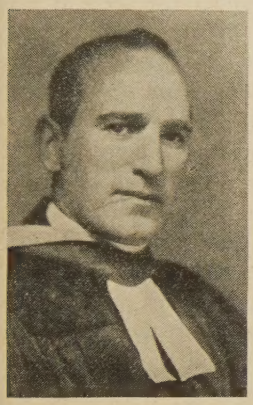
Christ's Appeal to Human Hearts

BY JOHN SUTHERLAND BONNELL

Whom having not seen, ye love. I Peter 1:8.

THE ADVENT of Jesus marked a turning point in human history. Our calendars reckon time from that event. This is all the more remarkable in view of his lowly birth and the limitations which circumstances imposed on him. He belonged to a race which, in his lifetime, was noted for its narrowmindedness, intolerance and fanaticism. He had little opportunity for education and culture. So far as we know he never once set foot outside of Palestine. His life was spent within a geographical area equal to the state of Connecticut.



That Jesus actually lived is no longer doubted by competent scholars, but our knowledge of his life is meager. The events surrounding his birth are told in a single chapter. We are given a fleeting glimpse of him at the age of twelve, and the events of the next eighteen years are described in one brief sentence from the pen of the physician Luke. There is not even a complete record of his active ministry. The four Gospels give us only in boldest outline the happenings of these three years. In the case of St. John's Gospel eleven of the twenty-one chapters, or practically fifty per cent, are devoted to the last week in the life of Jesus and to the post-resurrection appearances. The lowest estimate that has been made of his public ministry is four hundred days. Yet, according to one distinguished New Testament scholar, we have in the Gospels a record of only forty separate days.

But the impact of Jesus upon history is altogether out of proportion to the brevity of the records and is unexplainable by the circumstances in which he lived and died. At this point I quote the testimony of two distinguished scholars, neither of whom was a Christian. One was a rationalist and the other a pronounced skeptic. The first is William E. H. Lecky, British historian and philosopher. He declared that the simple record of the three short years of Jesus' active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. He referred to "that ideal character . . . which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love."

The second testimony is from the pen of Ernest Renan, the French scholar who spent several years in training for the priesthood of the Catholic Church but, overwhelmed by doubts, ended in skepticism. In his *Vie de Jesus,* Renan pauses when he reaches Calvary. He addresses the Man on the cross in these terms of passionate recognition: "Thou art destined to become the cornerstone of humanity in such wise that to tear Thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations."

And Renan concludes the book with these words: "Whatever may be the unexpected phenomena of the future, Jesus will not be surpassed. His worship will constantly renew its youth, the tale of his life will cause ceaseless tears, his sufferings will soften the best hearts; all the ages will proclaim that, among the sons of men, there is none born who is greater than Jesus."

JESUS' TRANSFORMING SPIRIT

We must go beyond the records of his life for an explanation of the profound influence of Jesus upon the world. In the few years alloted to him he gathered around him a little group of men and endeavored to impress on their minds his principles, and to inspire them with his own wondrous spirit. "He planted a few seeds, he kindled a few fires, he laid a few foundations," and then looked to his followers to carry on after he had gone. But far more powerfully than the records of his life, the spirit of Jesus has reached across the centuries, transforming men and women. He cannot be identified with any particular race or age or civilization—he stands above them all, appraising them, judging them, ennobling and inspiring them.

Whence comes the fiercest condemnation pronounced on the collective sins of the world today—race hatred, nationalistic isolation, economic injustice, the desire to exploit or enslave our fellow men? It comes not simply from the words but chiefly from the spirit of Jesus. Life has taught all of us that we cannot be false to him and be at peace with ourselves.

Edgar Sheffield Brightman, of Boston University, has said: "A Being who, nineteen hundred years after his death, can cause a civilization to question its own foundations, is no insignificant Jewish carpenter. He is a figure of world importance."

JESUS' SYMPATHY WITH HUMANITY

Now, what are the qualities in Jesus that have drawn to him the homage of all mankind and, in the words of Lecky, "have filled the hearts of men with impassioned love"?

First of all, it was his human sympathy and understanding. St. John, who lived closest to Jesus, said that "he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."

No one ever lived who had such an intimate knowledge of the human heart as did Jesus. He did not confine himself to the surface of life or to its circumference. He plumbed its hidden depths. He went back of conduct to the inner motives and the secret thoughts. Like a skillful physician he was able to diagnose every malady and, laying his finger on the seat of human ills, would say, "Thou ailest here and here."

How often we read in the records of his ministry, "He knowing their thoughts." The evangelists are not suggesting that Jesus was some kind of magical mind reader. But men felt and knew that there could be no concealments in his presence. And yet, how tender and understanding he was. He did not condemn men for their failures, he did not go about censoring people as so many of his followers do; neither did he excuse or palliate sin. He kindled hope in human hearts; he taught men and women what they might become. In his treatment of people there was an expression of tenderness and infinite pity that the world had never before seen and will never again see in such measure. It brought a rebirth of courage and confidence where despair had reigned.

Jesus was acquainted with life and he knew it in the heights and in the depths—in its sacredness and in its depravity. He knew the human heart.

A RADIANT PERSONALITY

Some of our artists have done less than justice to him. They have planted in the minds of men and women a conception of Jesus that is wholly false. They have depicted him as one completely out of touch with life. Take an artist like El Greco, for instance. The critics may acclaim his artistic sensitiveness, but the truth of the matter is that he has given to the world a Jesus who is anaemic and insipid, pallid and lifeless—utterly unlike the radiant Personality of the New Testament. The Man of Galilee was no hermit! He was no recluse! Indeed, when the religious leaders of his day wanted to criticize him, they said: "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Jesus understood human life and he needed not that any should testify of man.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his address to the divinity students at Harvard, in 1838, said:

> I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. . . . A snowstorm was falling around us. The snowstorm was real, the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it. . . . The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the fire of thought.

Now this last is exactly what Jesus was always doing. He handed out life to people—life passed through the fire of his own wondrous thought. His discourses were drawn from the everyday experiences of men and women. He talked of plowing and planting, of seedtime and harvest, of sunrise and sunset, of him

> Who stills the raven's clamorous nest
> And decks the lily fair in flowery pride.

Commonplace happenings were transfigured at his touch: the housewife sweeping the cottage floor or putting leaven into the meal, or bending over a much-patched garment; little children at play—at one moment piping a wedding march and at the next chanting a funeral dirge; laborers and shepherds, taxgatherers and judges, saints and sinners—all these were encompassed by the sweep of his teaching. And always he dealt with life—*sub specie aeternitatis,* "under the form of eternity"—to give men horizon and perspective, and to make them aware of God.

HOW JESUS TRANSFORMED PETER

What an experience it must have been to have listened to Jesus, to have watched the light in his eyes as he talked, to have come under the spell of his personality! All this had fallen to the lot of Simon Peter and it made a new man of him. If John could rightly be called the disciple whom Jesus loved, then Peter was the disciple who loved Jesus. All the passionate devotion of his rugged heart went out to the Master. One might have seen him seated in his boat on the Sea of Gennesaret or on a Galilean hillside listening with rapt attention to the words of Jesus. It is easy to picture him with his elbows on his knees and his chin resting on his hands, listening with eager, shining eyes—listening in the heat of the noonday, listening as the sun goes down behind the mountains, listening as the stars come stepping out one by one into the canopy of space and the night breezes cool his brow, never for a moment taking his eyes off that dear, dear face. To Peter it seemed impossible that anyone could know Jesus without loving him.

Years later, as Peter wrote a letter to his fellow Christians throughout the ancient world, it suddenly dawned upon him that countless thousands who had never been privileged to know the Master in the flesh gave to him the full devotion of their hearts. Deeply touched by this realization, Peter wrote into his letter the words of our text: "Whom having not seen, ye love."

OTHER RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY

One of the marvels of Christianity is the way in which the spirit of Jesus reaches across nineteen hundred years, transforming human lives in our day, shaming us out of our baseness, and strengthening every impulse for good within us.

If you met the Master today you would sit down before him and would tell him everything about yourself. You would tell him all the worst as well as the best. As you looked into his kindly eyes, you would see there only sympathy and understanding. He would say to you: "I know, my child, I understand. Life has not been an easy road for you—the temptations have been many—the way has been hard. I know, my child, I understand. But from now on life will be different.

A new and better way awaits you, the shining pathway to the heights. Come and follow me."

There was held in India a conference of representatives of various religions. An Arya Samajist who attended said to E. Stanley Jones: "Will you tell us, Dr. Jones, what you have in your religion that we in India have not got in ours?" He expected that Dr. Jones would talk about moral ideas and principles of philosophy. Dr. Jones replied: "Shall I tell you in a sentence? You haven't got Jesus." And that's the final answer. The religion that does not possess Jesus, the individual who does not know him as the Lord of Life, is missing the chief blessing that can come to man.

JESUS' VICARIOUS LOVE

Another reason why the love of human hearts has ever gone out to Jesus is because he not only dealt with men and women sympathetically but he entered into their life's experiences and helped them bear the load. Throughout the whole of his life, not merely on the cross, Jesus identified himself with man in his tragedy and sorrow and sin.

One day when Jesus was dining at the home of a wealthy Pharisee, a woman of the street came in and knelt at his feet, washing them with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The pharisee would have cast the woman out into the street had it not been for Jesus. The Master protected her. He threw around that woman's guilt the mantle of his own innocence.

In the city of Jericho the chief taxgatherer, Zacchaeus, was a man hated and despised by everybody. Jesus was impressed by the desperate need of that man's life and so he said to Zacchaeus: "I must have dinner with you tonight. I am going home with you." He identified himself with this hated man and thus drew to himself the criticism of the townspeople, but he won another life for God.

So was it always in his ministry. The vicarious element in the life and death of Jesus proceeds from his self-identification with man, from the depth of his sympathy and the intensity of his love. "Vicariousness is involved when one enters heart and soul into another's lot for his good. Love is always vicarious. Love says, 'Let me take your burden.'"

FOLLOWING JESUS TODAY

There is always a price to be paid for this kind of ministry. Jesus paid to the uttermost, giving even his life on the cross. No man can follow him to the limit of his vicariousness, because the degree of his divine sympathy is beyond our reach. Nevertheless, we too must pay the price of sympathy with our fellow men. If anyone thinks he can be a spiritual counselor without bearing on his soul the burden of human sorrow and sin, he is seriously mistaken. It is still true that

> He who lives more lives than one
> More deaths than one must die.

We cannot bring healing or redemption to a life from which we stand aloof. Many a mother has borne on her own innocence the burden of a wayward son's guilt. It may have broken her heart and turned her hair gray, but it brought his redemption. Many a wife has carried on her soul the burden of her husband's folly and sin. "Love is always willing that the chastisement of another's peace should fall upon it and that by its stripes another should be healed."

We grope for human analogies to make more clear to us the meaning of the Divine Love. Two years ago I journeyed to Richmond, Virginia, and visited there the White House of the Confederacy. I had always wanted to visit it and to enter one room in particular—the room that had been the office of Jefferson Davis, the room in which Lincoln had spent more than an hour at the close of the Civil War. To me it has always been holy ground.

When the news reached Washington that Lee was on the point of surrendering, Lincoln left at once for Richmond. Brushing aside the suggestion that there should be a triumphal procession, he walked through the streets of Richmond alone. Heartsore and weary, with his head on his breast, he came to the home of Jefferson Davis. He went alone into Davis' office. After a considerable time had passed and he had not emerged, one of the officers looked in and saw Lincoln seated at Jefferson Davis' desk, his head bowed on his arms and his giant frame shaken with sobs. Lincoln, a child of the men who wore the gray, a leader of the men who wore the blue, was weeping for the boys of the North and of the South—600,000 of them who would never return. In his great heart he carried the burden of a nation's anguish. That is vicariousness.

'WHOM HAVING NOT SEEN, YE LOVE'

Climb up that pathway dewed with the drops of sacrifice, and from its summit you will see a cross with great arms stretched out east and west toward the rising and the setting sun. On that cross hangs One who is complete in his self-identification with sinful man and perfect in his obedience to his Heavenly Father. In his own person he unites the redeeming love of God for man and the just judgment of God on human sin. He is Son of Man and Son of God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

Paul stood before that cross and, understanding its significance, cried out in adoring wonder: "Who loved me and gave himself for me." John looked upon it and wrote: "We love him because he first loved us." And Peter, thinking of the multitudes of another generation who had been won to Christ by the vision of his cross, wrote: "Whom having not seen, ye love."

Do we love him? Jesus said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Do we keep his commandments? That is the test of our love for him.

> See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
> Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
> Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
>
> Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Visitors to Bethlehem

By John Field Mulholland

MILLIONS of voices sing of a silent and holy night of long ago. Millions hear the story of a young mother who laid her firstborn son in a manger. Millions of Christmas cards take the mind back to a little town in a far away land. At Christmas time all the earth goes to Bethlehem. This year, as every year in the past, we shall be visitors to Bethlehem. Our hearts are filled with many emotions. We are happy over the joy of little children. We cherish the memories of other Christmases. And most of all, we are moved with a great concern over all who are in places of danger in this world which is now in the throes of a terrible war. These many emotions crowd our hearts. We cannot think of the Bethlehem of nineteen centuries ago, but we must.

I

The shepherds said, one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem."

The stillness of starlight lay over the Judean hills on that first Christmas night. But the shepherds who were watching over their flocks were not there for the beauty of the starlit night. The chill of the night comes quickly on the dry hills of Judea, and these men were away from the warmth of home because their livelihood demanded the endurance of hardship. Their own wealth consisted of the few sheep of the flock. But call it poverty rather than wealth, for only poverty could force them to accept cold and privation and loneliness and unceasing hours of labor. Their little flock was their all. Beasts of prey could impoverish them in a night. A single sheep wandering away into the wilderness had to be sought for and brought back. They molded their lives to the necessities of the flock. Day and night they had to be companions to their toil.

These shepherds, like the poor of every land, knew that every day was an adventure in which lurked insecurity and disaster. But all their labor had undertones of hope. All the little fortunes of a shepherd's life—the rains which freshened the pasture lands, the birth of twin lambs, the digging of a flowing well—could kindle hope. This hope was indomitable and whatever the disasters of one year had been would return with the new year with its fresh pastures and new life. Only the very poor find hope a necessary ingredient for living. They have little proverbs like "If it were not for hope, the heart would break." But their hearts do not break, for the hope becomes greater than their personal longings and merges into the hope of all who know hunger and cold and toil and pain.

Because the shepherds with their little hopes had felt the impact of a greater hope, they heard the song of the angels, a song of peace and good will. Only men who hoped for a better world would ever hear such a song. They knew the necessity of good will if a better world was to come. The greed of the tax collector, the rapacity of soldiers, the cunning of the trader in the market place ever robbed them of their little gain. These shepherds with their hope for a better world were quick to hear the song of promise for men who had found God's good will. If God's good will made its way into the hearts of the greedy and selfish, then the hope of a better day would not be in vain.

The shepherds, with hopeful hearts, heard the message of peace on earth. They feared war. They knew the insatiable appetite of armies. Armies would sweep away their few possessions. Armies would conscript them to fight in distant places. At all times the poor dread war. They know that if an embattled height is to be won, their bodies will lie unburied upon its slopes. So the shepherds heard the song of the angels and went to Bethlehem because the hope in their hearts led them. Their poverty allowed them only the richness of hope, but they worshiped the Christ with all that hope.

II

Behold there came wise men from the east.

But if hope is never realized it degenerates into cynicism. Hope may say with Omar:

> Ah Love, could you and I with Him conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire
> Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
> Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire?

but if the sorry scheme of things remains ungrasped, the maudlin drunkenness of Omar may be substituted for hope.

Hope requires wisdom to overcome conditions upon earth which would destroy that hope. Cynicism is ever present upon earth. The sins of men make shambles of the earthly paradise which hope would build. Wise men see the shambles and although they feel despair they seek for some way out of the darkness. The wise men of old lived in an age such as ours. Nations with centuries of history disappeared before the conqueror, the customs and thought of men were disturbed, overthrown, forced into new channels.

In such a world what should the wise do? Should they cull all the precedents from the past so the dead past could reign in the living present? Or should they seek for a new principle so the force of the new life should bring healing and not wasting to the souls of men? The wise men who came as visitors to Bethlehem had the learning of the past, but they saw the need of the world as being not more learning but a wisdom which had a new starting point for the learning which it possessed.

Everything which unaided thought can discover had been discovered in the ancient world. Our modern learning is merely an extension due to the use of accurate instruments and techniques of research. But the learning of the ancient world failed even as the

learning of the present fails. The wise men had studied the world wherein men make their pilgrimage. The wise men knew mankind. Yet learning failed to explain the purpose of man in the world in which they found themselves. Like the scientist Beebe who studied the jungle life for years, the wise men found a persistent "Why?" after all their learning.

The wise men came from the east seeking an answer to the question of the relationship of man to the force which made him and made the world. There is no record that they were disappointed in their answer. A little child was the answer to their seeking. And they worshiped him. The wise men had the humility of great learning. They knew they were looking for a new principle which would give direction to knowledge. Where could such knowledge be found except in a little child? They sought for one who was born to be King, with the wisdom of heaven and of earth. In such a one men would find an answer to the persistent "Why" of their pilgrimage on earth. So the wise men with humility came from the east to find one born to be King with wisdom enough to direct the lives of men into new channels.

III

Then Herod sent forth and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem.

But the hope of the poor and the learning of the wise were not the only things which sent men to Bethlehem. The soldiers of Herod came to Bethlehem. The visitors to Bethlehem came with cruelty as well as humility and reverence. The tread of marching soldiers reechoed through that Christmas time of long ago. Whenever the hopes and learning of mankind seek a fulfillment of their vision, that vision is disturbed by the martial sounds of soldiers.

The soldiers who came to Bethlehem came not of their own will but to serve another's will. The hatreds of Herods, their jealousies and their greeds will not end because humble men have a longing in their hearts and learned men have a vision in their souls. And the hatreds and cruelties of the Herods will always find men to do their will. The men who came as soldiers were mercenaries, caught by the desire for gain, for adventure, for the sight of distant lands. There were probably good men among them. Probably none of them would have been cruel enough to have slain a child, yet they marched to the commands of greed and hatred. Perhaps not a single one of them went to Bethlehem of his own desire, yet they were ready to sacrifice the world's hope for the sake of a hatred in which they did not believe, for the satisfaction of a greed which must have been distasteful to them.

Of all the tragedies of history few are greater than the ceaseless tragedy of men who, without hatred or bitterness in their own hearts, perpetuate the hatreds and bitterness of centuries. They are under the compulsion of evils too vast to comprehend, too sinister to be vanquished by a single individual. They are to be pitied, all men who go the way to Bethlehem and yet find that their very obedience but adds to the world's woe.

Dark was the mind of Herod with its cruelty and jealousy, and dark is the mind of every conqueror in the ages since who has ridden to power by brutality. The happiness which was the joy of angels singing was heard no more in Bethlehem, but only the voice of Rachel weeping for her children. Yes, the visitors to Bethlehem who came with marching tread brought the sorrow of mothers whose sons must fall by the sword.

This sorrow of mothers weeping inconsolate over the torn bodies of their sons is part of this Christmas time. It was part of the first Christmas. The beauty of angelic songs, the mother's deep prayer and the baby's low cry charm our hearts with the beauty of Christmas, but the tramp, tramp of agony and bloodshed, of horror and pain, will not be shut from our ears. All the earth goes to Bethlehem, but some go to destroy the world's hope and the world's joy.

IV

Because there was no room for them in the inn.

As all the earth goes to Bethlehem, does it go as the shepherds went with hope, or as the wise men went with knowledge, or even as the soldiers went with agony and pain? There were other visitors at Bethlehem that first Christmas night. Who they were we cannot know. Most of them probably came for the census enrollment which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. They were weary and came early to the shelter of the inn. They filled the inn until there was no room for the latecomers. They were probably good people, prudent, careful of themselves and their needs. They had no reason to be out in the cold of the night with only a hope to warm their hearts. They made no pretense of wisdom, so they saw nothing in the pattern of ages which sent them on distant journeys with only a star as a guide. They had no hatreds to serve, so they left without knowing of the weeping of mothers whose children had been slain.

We know nothing of these visitors to Bethlehem except this: they filled the inn. The glory of God passed by and they knew nothing of it. "The star rained its fire and the beautiful sang for the manger of Bethlehem cradled its King"—but if they did know there is no record that they gave any heed.

If we should go to Bethlehem, would we go as the humble poor went long ago, or as the wise men who came from lands afar, or as the soldiers marching under orders? Ah, no. How strange is the satire that we who spend the most at Christmas, who sing the most carols, who give the most, who want to exalt the Christ the most at Christmas—that we would be the seekers of comfort, the prudent and the careful who would fill the inn to overflowing while the glory of God passes us by!

All the world must go to Bethlehem, though some but shut the door to the Christ when they come. All the earth must go to Bethlehem, even if some go but to slay the world's hope. All the world must go to Bethlehem, and some will find the world's wisdom there. All the earth must go to Bethlehem, for there is earth's hope.

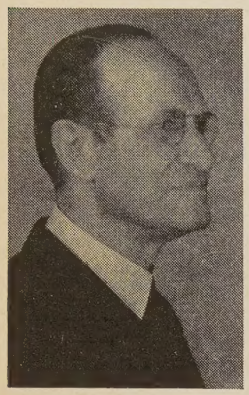
Let us go even now unto Bethlehem.

The Increasing Christ

By Clarence W. Kemper

He must increase but I must decrease. John 3:30.

"WHERE Christ is not the living center of everything, the value of the church has declined, its life has waned." So spoke T. R. Glover, renowned English scholar. He further said in his book *The Jesus of History* that "one of the weaknesses of the church today — put bluntly — is that Christians are not making enough of Jesus Christ." Rufus M. Jones recently remarked the same truth: "If the churches which in our cities and villages hold the key to the new day were once more swept with apostolic passion for him and his way of life, the issue would be settled." Dr. Jones speaks further of "the leadership and spiritual power of the living Christ as the head and front of a new humanity." Recall Paul's "not I but Christ" and his "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." The Reformation leaders held the same central message. One of them said of Paul that he "spoke pure flame." In every hour of awakening our Lord has stood in the midst, for "He must increase!"



WHEN FAILURE IS SUCCESS

John the Baptist had not the qualities of a social lion. His food, clothing, speech, convictions marked him as a rugged, fearless personality. Clearly, however, he belonged to the prophetic order, having brooded long over the ways of God and men until he came proclaiming a message of repentance. His followers, we gather, were uncertain, hence they came inquiring: "Is your work failing? The crowds are going after Jesus of Nazareth and are melting away from you."

Yesterday they thronged John and now he is alone. And John was being remade too. Some of his harshness and denunciation had gone. There is more wooing in his voice now. Both his voice and his heart had been toned to that "majestic sweetness." Now Christ fills his vision while his own life slips into the background. We are reminded of the occasion of David Livingstone's return from Africa when a friend asked him about his soul. "Oh," said he with some amazement, "I have been so busy trying to open the dark continent to my Christ, I had almost forgotten I had a soul." Indeed, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God."

"Greater works than these shall ye do," is the word of the wonder-working Lord to his disciples. Good and great work is greater than the workman. It remains after the workman is gone. All the yesterdays come up to today saying: "We must have better workmen than any yesterday, for the demands are greater. We are agents of an hour but the work may be related to the generations. God is alive, and his energies throb through the life of man, advancing his Kingdom, and he will not rest until that Kingdom is complete. Recall that hour when John was in prison and doubt, and Jesus' word was asked about the increasing work. "Tell John what you see and hear. Assure him that the poor have the gospel preached to them and he will understand that this is the work of the 'Increasing Christ.'" Elsewhere we hear our Lord saying, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you."

OUR GREAT CONTEMPORARY

We often remark the rapid changes in our modern world. It has been said that more progress has come to man in the past fifty years than in all previous history. It seems all but impossible that anyone could be at home equally through these contrasting generations and centuries. How could it be that a peasant carpenter in the Nazareth village, provincial and untraveled, could be at home in every generation? J. Middleton Murray said in the preface to his *Jesus, Man of Genius,* as he explains the writing of that book: "The time had come when it had become urgent upon me to make up my mind about Jesus." That is the way Jesus walks up to a modern mind and asks to be reckoned with.

Such a personality must have gone to the heart of life. He pierced all the outer coverings, laying bare the inner springs and deep motives of the human heart. In his day he pulverized many accepted dogmas and shibboleths. He saw straight into the heart of God. That vision came to him, he tells us, through struggle and travail. Moffatt's translation puts his words: "I have come to throw fire upon the earth. Would it were kindled already! I have a baptism to undergo. How am I distressed till it is all over!" This urgency in his own soul has been reflected in many modern minds and hearts. Consider how many, coming up over different paths, have undertaken to set forth this "Increasing Christ." J. Middleton Murray, Mary Austin, Giovanni Papini, T. R. Glover, Winifred Kirkland, John Masefield and many others, though not professional theologians, have undertaken with rare ability to give us a vivid picture of this Holy One of the centuries. Indeed, Jesus Christ seems to grow morally and spiritually taller with each succeeding generation. In fact as the shadows lengthen for man, he ushers in the sunrise.

JESUS HAD A HIGH OPINION OF MAN

The Hebrew psalmist put the question, "What is man?" Why does God show him favor above all other earthly creatures? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Jesus never forgets that man is a creature made "according to the image of God." Man keeps saying to himself, "What must I be and do to be human?" He is often called a predatory animal, deceitful and cruel. "But he is no less incurably a social, responsible, aspiring animal, who can no more rid himself of conscience than of his memory or his powers of speech, without ceasing to be man." Jesus went to work with this raw stuff

of human nature, reconciling and redeeming it. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Obviously he estimated human personality as the supreme value in our universe. "How much then is a man better than a sheep?" It was for him God gave his Son.

Now a conviction like that is at the opposite pole of the present totalitarian philosophy which makes man a creature of the state, a means to an end, a mere thing or means to achieve some end. If one wants to know how these wild philosophies look in the sight of God, let him be reminded of the words of Paul: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he is made manifest, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." Given a high opinion of man as seen through the eyes of Jesus, one is ever after his advocate, sworn to defend man against all enemies. "When Moses was grown up . . . he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens." And let John Haynes Holmes speak from our own generation:

> I hear my people crying in cot and mine and slum;
> No field or mart is silent, no city street is dumb.
> I see my people falling in darkness and despair;
> Whom shall I send to shatter the fetters which they bear?

Isaiah-like we answer, "Here am I, send me." And though all fail men, the "Increasing Christ" is heard with his "Lo, I am with you always."

JESUS BELIEVED THE UNIVERSE BELONGS TO GOD

Jesus felt that God would outride all the storms of man's evildoing. Often he "makes the wrath of man to praise him." When men have all but despaired one of God's prophets has recalled—"standeth God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own." It looked like Nero had it all his own way, but the captive Paul outlived him and pronounced the verdict on his generation. If we believe that dictators are to be supreme we exalt them to the place of God. This is a moral order, not an immoral order. It is held together by moral laws, not caprice. It is being guided toward some great moral and spiritual end and purpose by a God who made it for his children. In the long run this is a good world for good men and a bad world for bad men. "No man is good enough to keep another man in slavery," said the wise Lincoln. The modern dictators who trample upon the little people of the earth are but preparing for the whirlwind. "No society that countenances greed, injustice, violence and cruelty can permanently endure." Reconciliation is the word of the Scriptures. "Come now and let us reason together."

> O Master, from the mountain side
> Make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
> Among these restless throngs abide,
> O tread the city's streets again.
>
> Till sons of men shall learn thy love
> And follow where thy feet have trod;
> Till glorious from thy heaven above,
> Shall come the city of our God.

Jesus had abundant reason for pessimism and despair, but he accepted neither. It was an hour of spiritual eclipse when he died on the cross, but his words were those of moral victory. "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." He began with an announcement: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." At one time that Kingdom is within, and at another it seems corporal and social. It must have meant that all of life is to be lived after the manner of God's will and purpose. In the darkest hour, when hope was gone for his followers, he brought forth the glory of the Easter morn. Jesus' attitude is something real to fling into the face of the world's present sighing and despairing. "We have a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Hold to that when the storms break. We recall the Christian girl in Burma, when the Japanese invasion broke like a storm, saying: "All they can do is to kill our bodies." If we grow impatient in the storms, recall the words of the guide to the inexperienced mountain climber, terrified by a storm: "This is the way the day dawns in the Pyrenees."

OUR MOST RELEVANT PERSONALITY

What others seek blindly, Jesus approaches in the white light of truth and the purposes of God. Seeing human personality as the supreme value in our universe, he saw self-realization through service, self-giving, sacrifice. Nothing else will do. When men in all relations approach this they succeed best in living. Life is purposive, intelligent, benevolent. The universe can be trusted. God is going somewhere with his children and they will arrive when they learn to co-operate with him and one another.

Consider such modern movements as: the demand for democracy; for brotherhood among races, classes and nations; for a juster distribution of the goods of life; for equality in privileges; for intellectual freedom; for the spiritual triumph over selfishness, materialism and greed. These all had their rise high up in the tablelands of the life and teachings of Jesus, the "Increasing Christ."

Above the din and confusion of changing conditions we hear him saying and urging upon us: "Thy kingdom come." He is among us today where humble hearts make room, convicting us of a terrible sense of sin that we have succeeded so poorly in expressing the moral purpose of God. We somehow feel him in our presence to bring goodness to pass. Moreover, he stands out as the eternal symbol of God's suffering for the needs of humanity, challenging our hearts to make his cause our cause and his methods our methods. He is indeed our contemporary. He is more alive, more up-to-date, and has more to say to our acute human problems than any other personality. Listen: "He that findeth his life shall lose." "Whoever would be great must serve." "Blessed are the peacemakers." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbor as thyself."

Yes, Jesus is our best approach to life. He is the doorway leading into its real and rich values. Hear him say to us, "I am the door." Then hear his promise of security, freedom and food. What words to conjure with in our generation!

The call of Jesus is at the same time alluring, mysterious, costly, fearful. When his disciples saw him headed for Jerusalem they felt they must follow him yet were afraid to do so. Says Walter Horton: "He gave himself in so dramatic, tragic and compelling a fashion that no man to whom the gift is fairly presented can refuse it, unless he is blinded by prejudice or unless his soul is so narrow and constricted that it cannot expand to take in and comprehend so great a boon." Costly indeed is the way of Jesus, but it is the only solvent for the sin of man.

"He must increase but I must decrease." John, you are right in your doctrine of the Increasing Christ, and your stature is enhanced by the fact that you stood by his side.

We must make more of Jesus Christ. We cannot overdo it. He increases with the ages. Make way, all ye succeeding generations, for Jesus the Christ!

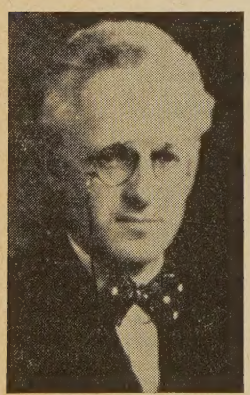
The House of Christmas

By Karl M. Chworowsky

In my Father's house are many mansions. John 14, 2a.

> And all the hills and all the valleys cry,
> And all the little echoes flung from earth and sky:
> "O Ye of aching heart that fret and roam,
> Come home!"

THE days of the great home-coming are here. The fires are lighted on the hearth. The candles burn brightly in the windows. The eyes of Home look out for the wandering ones, and the Heart of Home awaits the knock at the door to call out its gentle, "Welcome home!"



Wherever men dwell whose lives have been touched by that Master of Souls, the Christ, this season of his nativity still stirs within them those memories that so readily associate themselves with the symbols of hope, faith and love that assume new color and speak with new voices in the House of Christmas. For all whose hearts have been bruised, whose spirits have been bludgeoned by tragedy, whose lives have been twisted and tortured by the alarms of war and by the fears of these trying days—for all of these the House of Christmas offers refuge; a place for peace of mind, for quiet joy, for the gentle voices of poetry and music, for the soothing fellowship of kindred minds, and for communion with the Eternal One.

It is good to have such a place of refuge, such an asylum of escape. We know that at the heart of every personality there is the need for escape from the grinding wheels of drudgery and monotony, from the harrowing fears of the struggle for existence. Men may have been created with a capacity for courage, for valor and for battle; they are also creatures into whose hearts the Eternal One has put a great longing; they are aware of Augustine's nostalgic cry: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee." We are also created with a need to look "unto the hills from whence cometh our help" and to feel that eternity in our hearts which at the most unexpected times and places reminds us of our weakness, of our dependence upon one another for security and peace and of our ultimate dependence upon Him in whom are life and hope and faith and ultimate triumph.

The House of Christmas calls us back to the house of a Father in which there are many mansions, where there is room for all, and where an atmosphere of healing, of exaltation and spiritual revival awaits all. I know of no greater boon for us thwarted mortals than to make the most at this season of the invitation of Christmas to enter humbly and gladly into our Father's House, the House of Christmas.

'UNLESS YE BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN'

Let us think of the great Christmas wreath hanging from the front door of the House of Christmas as bearing the words: "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." For the House of Christmas is in a unique sense the House of Childhood, the home of those who are "children" not only because of their years, but because of their simplicity of spirit, the naturalness of their reactions to grace and love. Surely it is not mere coincidence that the center of the stage in the pageantry of Christmas should be occupied by a child and that among the other significant characters should be simple shepherds and humble wise men.

This is the day when childhood assumes new meaning, when truth takes on its simplest forms and speaks its plainest language, and when love becomes articulate in accents that only those who have "become as little children" and only the pure in heart can understand. Of no other festival of our religion can it be said as it may be said of Christmas that it is the great day of the children, and of no holiday of the soul can it be so truly said that the one important condition for the fullest enjoyment of its truth and beauty, its comfort and joy, is that we "turn and become as little children"; that we relearn the art of spiritual relaxation; that we practice a bit of intellectual and moral "deflation"; and that we appreciate again the meaning of open-mindedness and of that spiritual grace and dignity which are the surest tokens of the "children of God."

Christmas is the great home-coming day for the children, big and little, young and old; the House of Christmas is the House of Children where years have no terror, and where the artificialities of so-called "education" and pseudo-culture have no standing; where only these count: the immediate response of the heart to the Everlasting Mercy, the quick answer of human need to the divine bounty, the ready "Yes" from you and me as the ultimate affirmation of our hope and faith.

Surely the House of Christmas 1942 is needed as probably never before as a Home of Childhood, where

men may repair for the comfort of their souls and for the renewal of their spirits. If we should return from there cleansed from superficiality and hypocrisy, bearing away as our most precious Christmas gift true humility and childlike trust, may it not be that from the House of Christmas there will go out those blessings and benedictions needed to regenerate and to redirect an erring world?

'HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING'

The words of this rousing Christmas hymn remind us that the House of Christmas is pre-eminently the home of poetry and of music. The muses of poetry and of music have always been closest to the children of our race. Music woos us from our birth, accompanies us down the road of life, soothes us to sleep with the final lullaby of death. Poetry casts its spell over us from the cradle to the grave. How can Christmas but be the festival of poetry and music when its themes are those of Life Eternal, of Heaven come down to earth, of the Love that will not let us go? Its moods and emotions only poetry and music can adequately catch and fashion into majestic choruses and oratorios, or unfold in terms of delicate lyrics and simple carols.

Is there anything we need more on this day of supreme revelation than just this fellowship of those muses with their wands of magic? Let us rejoice that on this one day of the year an embattled world may close its doors upon the alarums of war, on the raucous voices of hatred and suspicion, on the whining tones of fear, and open wide its doors and windows to the music and poetry that verily come from high heaven, that men's hearts may be drawn away from the dust and dirt of the commonplace, from the ugliness of conflict and the disillusionment of competition to the high places of idealism and dreams that seem impossible of realization only because we are afraid of them. Marguerite Wilkinson has given us a lovely collection of Christmas poetry in her anthology, *Yule Fire,* and of this volume I quote only a few lines from Clinton Scollard's "The Little Town":

O Little Town, O little town,
Upon the hills so far,
We see you, like a thing sublime,
Across the great gray wastes of time,
And men go up and men go down,
But follow still the star!

And listen to the aching nostalgia of these verses by G. K. Chesterton:

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honor and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule-tale was begun.

The music lover takes for granted that Christmas should be the home of music as no other season can be. Under the spell of the scene in Bethlehem, immortal music has been written that has come to be as much a part of the atmosphere of the House of Christmas as the Gospel itself, as the fir trees, as the voices of little children.

Because the Christmas message touches truth where it is both most human and divine, it has from the earliest days down to our own time associated itself with song and instrumental music, forms of expression particularly dear and native to the genius of our race. Do we fully realize our glorious heritage when in the House of Christmas this world of beauty breaks upon us and from the first moments of Holy Eve on sings with and through our souls as organ and voice intone those mighty strains of triumph and victory, when choruses throw those inimitable Hallelujahs to the skies, and children sing out "O Little Town of Bethlehem" or Pietro Yon's exquisite "Jesu Bambino." If there be balm in music and healing in poetry, let us return to the House of Christmas to listen anew to those truths that only exalted speech and inspired music can completely catch and convey. For there are things that remain obscure to the sermonizer, there are places that no argument can explore, and there are convictions that no orator dare essay; however, when the poet speaks, when the musician sings or plays, how clear the ultimate mystery becomes and how simple the heights and the depths appear to which proud reason and arrogant logic aspire in vain!

'PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN!'

The House of Christmas is also the house of *all* people. It is the home of Everyman, of Everysoul. All the children of the all-Father find welcome and rest here and irrespective of age and experience, of class, race, color and creed, discover here the realization of their Utopias, the fulfillment of their heart's desire. It is frequently forgotten that when the House of Christmas first opened its doors it was for *all* men; for Christmas is as old as the race itself, as old as that first day when men rejoiced in the return of longer days after the night of winter, when men's souls felt the first glow of joy and fulfillment in the quickening of every vital instinct and of every human longing.

How strange that the greatest truth of all, the sacred mystery of God become flesh, of love incarnate in human personality, should ever have assumed exclusive form in dogma and theology! How strange that men who speak so glibly of a God who "so loved the *world*" should ever, and particularly at Christmas, want to restrict this love and limit the bounty of this miracle to some church, or race, or nation. If the story of Christmas has any meaning, its meaning must include a catholicity that transcends any boundary of race, color or creed. If ever the universality of the Love of God must be proclaimed in its fullest and freest aspects, it is at this season in the House of the Father, the House of Christmas. We have strayed far from the natural and inevitable ecumenicity of Christmas. Too many of us have selected one of the many mansions in the House of Christmas and have established ourselves there as though we had become squatters on some little reservation or on some little island that has no connection with the rest of the world.

If the words "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men" make sense at all, surely they must stand for a divine love for *all* men that surpasses our little loves and our small affections as the divine wisdom dwarfs our puny intelligence, and these words at this time must again become stern reminders of the wounds that must be healed in the body of our poor humanity, of the bruises that must be gently tended, of the good that must be done, of the evil that must be forgiven, of the love that must rise to heights never before known.

Turning away for at least this one day from the grim business of war and setting our minds upon those things that build and heal, upon those functions of society that save and restore, let the "many mansions" of the House of Christmas again bring us the assurance that the day of brotherhood is not afar off, nor has its coming been indefinitely postponed. On the contrary, in the House of Christmas where all men meet we shall find that brotherhood is still too much a dream precisely because too few of us have had the faith and courage to translate a beautiful vision into a brave fact.

The equality of all men before God and Law, the common origin and destiny of all men, the inescapable oneness of all born of women, are at the heart of all high religion. This is the royal patent proudly displayed on the walls of the House of Christmas for all to read, for all to remember. Therefore the House of Christmas is hardly the place for dogmatic argument, for polemics or apologetics, for the flaunting of proud creeds. God incarnate, indeed! What theology, what philosophy has the right to arrogate to itself the privilege of exclusive interpretation of so momentous a truth? What church or what school dares to say on this day and in this house: *"We* are *His* sole messengers? *We* have the sole authority to speak for *Him!* Only through *our* creed dare you enter into the holy of holies which is the House of Christmas!" Surely in our Father's house there is no place for such pride, and in the House of Christmas only humility and reverence will open the door and find a home.

'GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST'

It seems fitting to close our homily with these words, words that the simple Gospel story ascribes to the angels as the closing cadence of their song. For that is the first and last word of Christmas: We are of God, in him we live and move and have our being, and returning to the House of Christmas we are but "coming back," homing like weary birds, returning as wandering children that have found neither rest nor joy nor fulfillment nor satisfaction in far lands, among strange scenes and among people we knew not.

It is better not to try to *say* too much when we speak of Him, so we shall now close the doors of the House of Christmas upon the bright scenes within. If you are among its guests, you will need no further words to introduce you to Him, the Father of the House, the Master Artist, the One in whom *all* men are brothers, the Truth of truths, Life of life, our Lord and the Lord of him who was born on Christmas Eve. By the gentle persuasion of his spirit, let us enter the House of Christmas with pure hands and upright minds. Let us come humbly and quietly as those who know they are entering the sanctuary of Home. Let nothing disturb the lyrical glow, the silent reverence, the goodly dignity, the majestic glory of this place. Let us come as children, let us abide as the poor in spirit and the pure in heart, as the merciful, and as the peace-makers.

Let us drink deeply of the beauty dispensed here; let our souls be flooded with music and our spirits be exalted by poetry. Then Truth will speak as never before, and God himself will say, not as judge but as Father: "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Then shall we know, and knowing we shall believe, and believing we shall go forth as those who on the Mount of Transfiguration have stood with the Eternal One and from that experience have wrung a new faith by which to live bravely and triumphantly.

To an open house in the evening
  Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
  And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and are,
To the place where God was homeless
  And all men are at home.

The Hungers of the Heart

By Herbert J. Doran

I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. John 6:35.

RECENTLY, a young woman who was already over-busy said to me: "This winter I am going to be busier than ever. The only way to avoid being unhappy is to have no time to think." In these words she expressed the restlessness that is in the hearts of many people. Here is a man who says: "If I could just get my hands on another $100, I would be satisfied." Or here is a woman who says, "All I need is a new dress to make me happy." Or here is a nation that says, "Just one more colony and we will be satisfied." So we go rushing off for more money, or new clothes, or greater empires, only to awaken a short time later with the same restlessness driving us on again and again; for it is still the same man with the extra money in his pocket, and the same woman in the new dress. The need is in ourselves, rather than in outward things. We have an inner voice crying out for that which material things cannot satisfy.

Someone has said that night clubs are maintained by adults who are trying to keep from growing up. I

submit that "juke boxes" are maintained by people who are trying to keep from hearing themselves. For, having pushed aside that inner self early in the morning and shut it from their minds during the day, and at night frantically having sought to escape him in a round of music, even then they are afraid lest he pop up like Banquo's ghost and start whispering in their ears. So they pick out the noisiest record and drop a nickel in the slot to keep from hearing themselves.

It was to such people that Isaiah said: "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? . . . Eat that which satisfieth." (Isa. 55:2.) At this Advent season it is fitting that we think of the hungers of the human heart, and of the Bread which alone can satisfy them.

I

For one thing, *the human spirit has a hunger for an understanding of itself.* In "The Iliad," Zeus declares: "Of all the things that creep and breathe upon the earth, there is nothing, methinks, more piteous than a man." Why? Because he alone tries to understand himself. Dr. Calhoun reminds us that the kitten which romps over our table and climbs our curtains may be a problem to us, but it is not a problem to itself. Only man is a problem to himself. In great drama and art, in philosophy and science, in poetry and religion, man wrestles with that eternal question: Who am I? Just a bit of froth cast up by the churning of nature—a bubble that will burst tomorrow? Just a machine that is not responsible for what it does? Just an ape that has taken a turn for the worse? In the most lavishly furnished physical home that man has ever had, man's spirit is not at home. And he continually asks, "Who am I?"—and lacking a satisfactory answer he is ill at ease with himself and others.

In the second place, *we hunger for something to which we can give allegiance.* We like to belong to something greater than ourselves. That is why we wear buttons in our lapels. I recall seeing a man two years after the close of the World's Fair in Chicago, who was still wearing on the lapel of his coat a button which read, "I Attended the Century of Progress." That man did not have much to belong to. But I can understand that man. Something had taken him out of the rut of humdrum monotony of being a hired hand on the farm and, for a brief moment, had lifted him up and shown him that he and his task were a part of the onward march of man in a century of progress. After that, milking cows and feeding the pigs were never quite the same. So, without thinking about it, he continued to wear the pin which reminded him of it.

That is why we have dictatorships. Men hunger to give allegiance to something greater than themselves. We grow restless trying to find what we like to do. We long for someone to take these scattered strands of life, weave them into a single cable, and pull them taut with a challenge we can obey. The promise of blood, sweat and tears does not frighten us, for it feeds the wells of our courage. We have a hunger to give allegiance to something greater than ourselves.

We have a third hunger—*a hunger for a new start.* Omar Khayyam has written what is in our hearts:

> The moving finger writes, and having writ,
> Moves on. Nor all your pity nor wit
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line;
> Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.

Yet we long to shed the mistakes of the past, to lay down the burden of those wrong choices, to turn the leaf and start afresh. In his play, "Back to Methuselah," George Bernard Shaw makes Adam say to Eve: "We have to live here forever. Think what forever means. It's the horror of having to be with myself forever. That is what makes me sit brooding and silent and hateful . . . I like you; but I do not like myself. I want to be different; to be better; to begin again and again; to shed myself as a snake sheds its skin." Every one of us knows just what he is talking about, for we, too, have longed to shed ourselves, as a snake sheds its skin. We have a hunger for a new start.

The human heart has another deep hunger. Not only to understand ourselves, not only for that to which we can give allegiance, not only for a new start, but we have also *a hunger for a fellowship with that which brings completion to our incompleteness.* Our life is like some jigsaw puzzle which has lost half its pieces, and can never find its true unity or show its true picture until they have been found. Part of our lack is filled by the fellowship of friends and loved ones, but still we long for what Wordsworth called a "central peace, subsisting at the heart of endless agitation." Like eyes searching for light, like ears straining for song, our spirits yearn for a fellowship that will bring completion to our incompleteness.

II

These are some of the hungers of the human heart. Unsatisfied, they keep gnawing away. And lacking the only food that will satisfy them, like the hungry children of Europe, we try to fill our stomachs with dry grass and roots, bark of trees, unpalatable trash that only increases our distress. In our restlessness we hear the voice of Isaiah, still asking: "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? . . . Eat that which satisfieth." What is there that can satisfy these hungers of the human heart? Across the centuries there comes to us at this Advent season the voice of One who said: "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Here is the only Bread that can satisfy our hunger for an understanding of ourselves.

We usually think of the incarnation of Christ as a revelation of God, but it is also a revelation of what man is. One of my earliest memories is a visit with friends in the country. While I was supposed to be asleep in the attic, the neighbors gathered downstairs for an oldtime country dance. From the squawking of that fiddle, I could never learn what a violin truly is. But recently I heard a young woman play, with purity of tone and brilliant precision. Then it was that I knew what a violin could be. We watch our own fumbling efforts, and we cannot understand our-

selves. We look to God and then we know what God meant man to be. Our true humanity is revealed only in Christ. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

Reinhold Niebuhr, in his book *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* says: "This essential homelessness of the human spirit is the ground of all religion; for the self which stands outside itself and the world cannot find the meaning of life in itself or the world . . . To understand himself truly means to begin with a faith that he is understood from beyond himself, that he is known and loved of God, and must find himself in terms of obedience to the divine will."

This leads us to our second hunger—for that to which we can give allegiance?

In one of the best statements of the causes of war, James says: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not . . . Submit yourselves therefore to God." Only as we have an allegiance to something greater than ourselves can these tangled threads of life be woven into a single chord. The trouble with most of our allegiances is that they are to things too small. E. Stanley Jones reminds us that fascism is a supreme allegiance to nation, and the highest allegiance of the nazi is to race, while communism is a supreme allegiance to class. But all of these are too small and, by their limitations, bring conflict and division. Only One is great enough for our supreme allegiance.

I saw the conquerors riding by
With cruel lips and faces wan:
Musing on Kingdoms sacked and burned
There rode the Mongol Ghenghis Khan;

And Alexander, like a God,
Who sought to weld the world in one;
And Caesar with his laurel wreath;
And like a thing from Hell, the Hun;

And leading like a star, the van,
Heedless of upstretched arm and groan,
Inscrutable Napoleon went,
Dreaming of Empire and alone. . . .

Then all they perished from the earth,
As fleeting shadows from a glass,
And, conquering down the centuries,
Came Christ, the Swordless, on an ass.

(Harry Kemp)

And what can satisfy our hunger for a new start—our desire to shed ourselves as a snake sheds its skin?

Centuries before George Bernard Shaw thought of that figure of speech, the Apostle Paul wrote to his converts: "For you have stripped off your old self with its ways, and have put on that new self, newly made in the likeness of its Creator." (Goodspeed.) The Christian gospel is the good news of the second chance. Its theme song is "Repent and be baptized," not only to forget the past but to receive strength to begin the new. Christ is the only Bread of Life that can satisfy our hunger for a new start.

What of our hunger for a fellowship with that which brings completion to our incompleteness?

The psalmist knew our own restlessness. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" But he knew, too, for what he hungered. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." How restlessly man has sought for God, until there came One who could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Hear the testimony of Paul: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Add to that the word of St. Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and we are restless until we find our rest in Thee."

James Hilton has caught up this restlessness, and keeping it on the human level has made it the theme of his latest novel, *Random Harvest.* It is the story of a man who, because of shell shock in the last world war, has lost his memory of all that went before. In his new life, he meets his wife but does not recognize her. He falls in love with her and again marries her. But she keeps this secret in her heart, awaiting the time when he shall discover it for himself. He becomes a successful business man, apparently having all that his heart could desire. But always he is haunted by that unremembered past. At the most unexpected moments, the vaguest outlines of forgotten memories drift before his eyes, only to fade away before he can grasp them, and always he is searching for the girl whom he had loved. At last, on a Christmas morning, guided by some strange impulse, he returns to a little town and a half-remembered hill, "and there he finds waiting for him his wife, whom he now recognizes as the one whom he had 'loved long since and lost awhile.' "

It is such a moment in the history of the world, or in the life of an individual, when going back to that little town of Bethlehem or that half-remembered hill of Calvary, he finds there One whom he had known before, but whom he now recognizes as that something else for which he had been searching—the key to the understanding of ourselves, the Master to whom we can give allegiance, the open door of forgiveness, and the God who alone can bring completion to our incompleteness.

"I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Prayer

LORD, make me an instrument of Thy peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

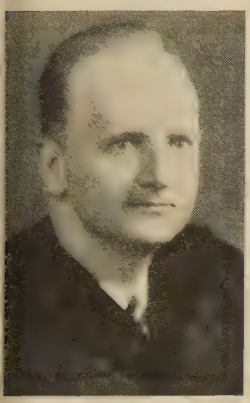
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

Christians at Their Best

By Edward H. Pruden

Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but . . . I press toward the mark. Phil. 3:13, 14.

THE Christian missions that were held in cities all over America during the last two years sounded a watchword which needs to be repeated and re-emphasized again and again. That watchword was probably suggested by the director of the missions, Dr. Jesse M. Bader of the Federal Council of Churches, and its message was this: "When the world is at its worst, Christians ought to be at their best."



Harris & Ewing

There are four things I want to say about that watchword this morning, and the first is: It is true! The more terrible the world becomes, the more need there is for magnificent Christians. Mediocre Christians will never do much to make a bad world better. Much of our present distress is largely due to inadequate Christians. A great multitude of half-hearted Christians cannot accomplish nearly so much as a small group of genuine, thoroughgoing Christians. It was not a mighty host of God-fearing men and women who changed the course of history nineteen hundred years ago, but one solitary figure who was unreservedly surrendered to the will of God, and who, after a while, was able to influence others.

The second thing I want to say about this watchword is this: It infers that Christians today are not at their best. It suggests that Christians ought to be at their best, thereby leaving us to infer that they aren't; and that is true also. We may comfort ourselves by placing the war guilt at the door of somebody else, but in our more honest moments we must admit that we are plenty responsible ourselves. How often, when I hear of some battle in which thousands of my fellow human beings lost their lives, do I instinctively and spontaneously pray, "O Lord, forgive *me.*" I know, as you know, that if every Christian had been at his best during the past twenty years this horrible war could never have happened. It will happen again, however, if in the next twenty years Christians are not at their best.

IN A WORLD AT ITS WORST

But there is a third thing I want to say about this watchword, and it is this: It isn't easy for a Christian to be at his best when the world is at its worst. The Christian, if he isn't careful, will reflect his environment instead of influencing it. Our ministers' conference had a joint session recently with the Negro ministers' conference, and representatives of both groups spoke. One of the Negro speakers said: "We Negro ministers influence our congregations, while you white ministers are influenced *by* your congregations." Then he added: "I can prove it; for if one of us wanted to have one of you preach in his pulpit, he could do so and the Negro congregation would be delighted. But if one of you white ministers wanted to invite one of our Negro ministers to preach in your pulpit, you would have to consult your congregation, and in all likelihood your people would not allow you to do it." There was general laughter by all present, but we all knew that the truth had been spoken.

So it is with the Christian amidst the world in which he lives; he is more inclined to be a reflection of the opinions of men rather than a molder of these opinions. He will become like other people instead of helping other people to become like himself. That is why God says to his people, "Come out from among them and be ye separate." We have been bought with a price and redeemed for a purpose.

Now the fourth thing I want to say about this watchword is this: If it is to be attained, there are two things which each Christian must do. These two things are absolutely essential if, in a world at its worst, the Christian would be at his best.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE BASIC

First of all, he must have an experience upon which a genuinely Christian life can be built. I used to wonder just exactly what Jesus meant when he said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." Then one day it occurred to me that when we are confronted by something that seems strange and hard to comprehend, we lift our hands as if to surrender and say, "I'm sorry but I just can't see it." I'm sure that is what Jesus meant in his words to Nicodemus. He said in effect: "Nicodemus, if you do not have this initial, indispensable experience of spiritual rebirth, you can never see—that is, grasp, appreciate, desire, appropriate—the kingdom of God."

Every pastor knows just how true these words are. He presents to his congregation a message containing a call to the higher levels of Christian thinking and acting, and when the message is over, some will come and say, "Pastor, I'm sorry, but I just can't see it." These individuals have never had that vital experience which prepares one for the call of Christ to Christian living at its best. Sometimes there is even hostility to the message presented because the mind has not yet yielded itself to the influence of Christ.

I sometimes feel that a minister is wasting his time and the time of his congregation by preaching on the higher realms of Christian thinking, and that he should stop and return to basic principles, making sure that his hearers have first yielded themselves in utter abandon to the lordship of Christ. I was recently invited to speak at the vesper service in a fashionable girls' college, and when I stood before the young ladies I said to them: "When I have come to you in former

years I have probably touched only the periphery of things. Tonight I want to strike rock bottom and speak to you about fundamental things." Then I talked to them very seriously about the necessity of the new birth. When the service was over, one of the professors took me aside and said: "Let me commend you on your courage. Your message tonight was exactly the message our girls needed at a time like this."

The editors of the *Readers' Digest* approached Bertrand Russell several months ago and asked him to write out the message he would give to the American people if he were standing before a microphone and knew that 130,000,000 people were listening in. He wrote that message and it was printed in the *Digest.* This one sentence stood out above all the rest as I read it: "A good society is produced only by good individuals." Bertrand Russell does not profess to be a Christian—he is numbered among the unbelievers—but in this sentence he was preaching the new birth without realizing it; for "good individuals" are produced only by this transforming experience concerning which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus.

The good life is not a result of wishful thinking nor of strenuous effort, but of surrender—the willingness to dethrone self and enthrone Christ. Our Lord does not say to us, "Try to live as I live," but "Let me live *in* you." When Paul said "Christ liveth in me," he revealed the secret of a truly Christian life.

CHRISTIANS IN THE MAKING

The second thing that is absolutely essential if Christians are to be at their best when the world is at its worst is this: We must never think of ourselves as finished, complete Christians, but only as Christians in the process of becoming. I am sure that this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Philippians: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but I press toward the mark."

The worst thing that can happen to a Christian is for him to feel that he is about as Christian as he can ever hope to be, or that he is about as Christian as he cares to be in a fairly respectable society. As long as we compare ourselves with other men we may appear in a rather favorable light, but if we compare ourselves with the crystal Christ we shall readily see the tremendous amount of spiritual progress we have yet to make.

As I look out over the world this morning there are several areas in which *I* should like to be a better Christian.

I think first of the whole international situation which faces us today. It isn't easy to be a complete Christian in regard to that. As I read the latest newspapers and hear the news broadcasts I am sure my emotional response is the same as yours. I am filled with indignation and sometimes I am conscious of a feeling that borders on animosity and even hate. It is then that I look myself squarely in the face and admit that I am far from being a finished Christian. I know very well that neither individuals nor nations behave in a criminal fashion unless there is some psychologic cause for it.

I saw a picture some time ago which some of yo must have seen; it was entitled, "A Woman's Face. The story had to do with a girl who sustained a seve burn on her face in her childhood which left her te ribly disfigured. As she grew older she noticed th people shrank back from her when they saw her scarre face, and she was naturally very sensitive about it. I time, this sensitiveness grew into a great hatred f people generally, and finally this girl said: "All righ if the world is against me then I shall be against th world." From that day forward she followed a caree of deception and thievery that nearly wrecked her ver existence.

CHRISTIANITY MEANS BROTHERHOOD

If I mistake not recent world history, it has followe a psychological pattern similar to the one outlined i the above story. At the close of the last war we pointe the finger of scorn at certain nations and said to them "You alone are responsible for the terrible catastroph which came upon us; we shall heap heavy burden upon you and hold you up before the world in di honor and disgrace." It was then that these nation said: "All right, if the world is against us, we sha be against the world"; and they began a program o plunder that has brought the entire world to the ver brink of destruction.

I would not for a moment condone nor approv anything that the aggressor nations have done—the behavior is as horrible to me as it is to you—but should like very much as a Christian to go behind an beneath their actions and try to discover the unde lying causes for what they are doing. I should like t be numbered among that group that is trying t remove these causes, for only as they are removed wi peace be possible. In this world of hate, I should lik very much to be a better Christian regarding the whol international situation which we face this morning.

I should like also to be a better Christian in m attitude toward all my fellow men, regardless of rac or nationality, or creed. This, I must admit, is not a easy task, but it is a task that I must undertake if am to be a true follower of Christ. When I read i the New Testament that the Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans, and that they even refused to ea with them, I may be inclined to condemn the Jew until I look into my own life and discover somethin of that same pharisaical attitude which existed ninetee hundred years ago. I look at my children and thin of the opportunities and privileges that they will hav when they grow up, and then I recall that the childre of men of other races may never have those opportun ities and privileges, and I wonder just how Christia I really am as long as I am content to live in a worl where a situation of that sort exists without trying t do something about it. I should like very much to b a better Christian in regard to the attitude which pre vails in my heart toward men of other races an nationalities and creeds.

Finally, I should like to be a more complete Christian in regard to the spirit that dominates my life. We live in a tense world, and if we aren't careful, we will find ourselves becoming irritable and saying things to loved ones and friends that hurt and wound. I should like to maintain an even, gentle, Christlike spirit under all circumstances and toward all men. We are living in a terrified world, and if we aren't careful we too will become victims of those haunting fears that have so possessed the minds of most men. I should like to maintain a trustful spirit and remember that this is my Father's world. We are living in a pessimistic world, and if we aren't careful we will fall a prey to the doubts and anxieties of the average man.

I should like to feel that this is just an era through which we are passing that is similar to other eras in the world's history, and to be confident that even as God brought his people through trying times in the past, even so will he bring us through these days unto a goodly place. Men may delay God's plans and thwart them temporarily, but ultimately God must win. We cannot believe otherwise.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but I press toward the mark!"

A Psalm of Confidence

THE SPIRIT OF MAN shall triumph and reign o'er all the earth.
The earth was made for Man, he is heir to all that therein is.
He is the end of creation, the purpose of the ages since the dawn of time.
He is the fulfillment of all prophecy and in himself the goal of every great hope born in high desire.

Who art Thou, O Spirit of Man?
Thou art the Child of the Infinite, in thy nostrils is the breath of God.
Thou didst come at Love's behest, yea! to fulfill the Love of the Eternal didst Thou come.
Yet Man's beginnings were in lowliness, in nature akin to that of the brute.
His body and appetite bore the marks of the beast, yet in his soul was the unquenchable Spark of Divine Fire.
His ascending hath been with pain, with struggle and conflict hath he marched toward the Ideal.
At times he hath turned his face away from the promise of Destiny.
He hath given reins to the lust of the brute; he hath appeared at times as the child of Hate.
He hath forgotten his Divine Origin, he hath forsaken the dream of Eternal Love.
Then hath he lifted his hands against his fellows and war and bloodshed have dwelt upon the earth.
In moments of blind passion he hath destroyed the work of his own hands, the fruit of the centuries hath he cast to the winds.
He hath marred the Divine Image, deaf to the call of the promise of God.
Upon the altars of Self hath he sacrificed Brotherhood, and ruled by avarice and greed he hath slain Justice and Right.
Thus have wickedness and sin dwelt in his midst, and

A Pastoral Prayer

By Herbert W. Hahn

ETERNAL and gracious God, our Heavenly Father, who hast been our help in ages past and who art our hope for years to come, we thank Thee for the goodly heritage that is ours; for the faith of those who in times past have walked by Thy guidance and were not ashamed; for the inspiring example of apostles, prophets, saints, seers and holy men in all ages; for the courage and heroism of our forebears; for the nation which they founded; yea, and for the sacrifice of those who have given their lives that we might have life, liberty and happiness.

As heirs to a great tradition, we would not forget our indebtedness to past generations nor our obligations to those yet to come. As we remember those who gave their lives to help secure our freedom, may we highly resolve that these noble dead shall not have died in vain; and that this nation—and all other oppressed nations throughout the earth—shall, under God, have a new rebirth of freedom.

May there be a revival of faith in Thee, and of loyalty to Christ and his cause. At this Christmas season we pray that the day may not be far distant when all the sons of men shall acknowledge Thee as their Heavenly Father and their fellow men as brothers; when justice, peace and good will shall again prevail, and all men and nations shall learn the art of living together as good friends and neighbors, and shall work for the common good—that Thy Kingdom may truly come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

his soul hath been chained in the bondage of low desires.
Yet all this could not destroy the unquenchable Spark of Divine Fire.
For it belongs to the Eternal and that which is Eternal cannot die.
Therefore, great though Thy shortcomings, manifold though Thy failures, wicked though Thy crimes,
I will not despair, O Spirit of Man!
Thou canst not forever deny the God that is within Thee, nor turn Thy back upon the Ideal.
Though Thou destroyest fairest hopes, yet shall th live again.
Though Thou returnest to the level of the beast, Tho shalt arise to the heights of Thy Divine Humanit
For the Spirit of Man breathes the untiring purpose the Living God and to the fulfillment of that purpo the whole creation moves.

HORACE WESTWOOD.

NOTE: This inspiring prose poem has frequently been credit to Stanton Coit, but it is from the pen of Dr. Westwood, wh is the minister of the First Unitarian Church, Berkeley, Cali

Christmas Comes to a Tree

A Sermon for Children

BY CARL S. WEIST

FOR God so loved the world that He gave. . . ." His only begotten Son—on Christmas Day. And ever since the world has awakened on Christmas morning with a thrill of happiness. Something new and beautiful came to earth with the little Babe of Bethlehem. What was that? The Spirit of Giving. Christmas tells us that it is better to give than to receive; it is better to make someone happy than to please ourselves.

Let us see how a tree discovered this secret.

* * *

Deep in a forest of Maine, since early morning a spruce tree had been quietly weeping. When the day had begun, the little tree was happy enough for the sun was shining brightly and there was excitement in the air. Some men and boys had come with axes and shovels and were cutting and digging all around it. When the icy wind blew through its needles, the little tree hummed and whistled with the workmen as they sang songs of Christmas. One by one the smaller trees were taken. "Here is a perfect one," a man would say. "What a beauty!" a boy would shout. Once someone came close to the spruce but only to laugh.

"We can't take you," said the voice, "you're too ugly. No one would want you."

Then the little tree knew what was wrong. For the first time it looked down at its branches and realized that the boy was right: it was ugly. One of its branches hung down, another was far too long, and on one side there were no limbs at all. It was hurt through and through. Its friends were being taken to large and lovely houses where they would stand by the side of blazing fires with wonderful lights and gifts hung upon them, but that was not for the spruce; it was left entirely alone.

As the sun mounted higher, the snow on its branches turned to tears which fell upon the ground, each drop burning a hole in the white blanket. With no one to talk to, it stood in the clearing, thinking sadly: "No one ever does anything for me. Why couldn't I be made happy at Christmas?"

What was that? It raised its head a little. Voices! Sure enough, coming straight toward it were sever boys and girls excitedly running and shouting.

"Look!" said one, "a tree! Isn't it wonderful! Jus for us. Hurry, let's get it home before dark."

They began to dig, and before long it felt itse moving, and then borne aloft on the shoulders of sturd boys. Soon, to its amazement, the spruce found itse set up in a corner of a rather bare-looking room. Ther was hardly any furniture and one of the windows ha paper over it to keep out the cold. But that did no matter; there were love and merriment in the roon much laughing and singing.

The children gathered around with popcorn, re apples, and angels cut out of colored paper. They hun them all over the tree till it fairly quivered with ex citement. Finally they made a star out of silver pape and one of the boys hung it on the topmost branch Then the family, father and mother, uncle and aun boys and girls, and even the littlest girl joined hand and danced around singing the loveliest Christma carols the spruce had ever heard.

* * *

What a Christmas! Who would have dreamed tha anyone could have such happiness in a place like that The tree looked down at itself. "Why, I'm positivel beautiful!" it cried.

"Yes," said a voice which seemed to come from little angel near the star. "You are beautiful. Al giving hearts are beautiful. You wanted to have thing given to you. You thought you were ugly and ha nothing to give. But see what happiness you hav brought to these children. Christmas is the time whe God gave—gave His Son. Do you understand?"

The tree shook its head till the star almost fell out It did understand.

After the lights went out and the family was asleep the little spruce, tingling with excitement, hummed Christmas carols to itself through the hours of th long, quiet night.

Do you understand? God so loved the world tha He gave. Christmas is giving, sharing, bringing chee to someone. What will you give?

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Richardson, Vernon B.: "Beyond the Immediate" (April)
Root, Edward Tallmadge: "The Wrath of Man Shall Praise Thee" (July)
Ruopp, Harold W.: "When Life Tumbles In" (September)
Scharfe, Howard C.: "Now that War has Come" (February)
Scherer, Paul E.: "God's Claim on Man's Mind" (January)
Smith, Herbert Booth: "Religion that Works" (July)
Smith, Roy L.: "Carrying Bones to Canaan" (June)
Sockman, Ralph W.: "The Eternal and the Timely" (January)
Sockman, Ralph W.: "The Salt of the Earth" (May)
Stauffacher, A. D.: "Laymen and Missions" (November)
Stidger, William L.: "The Look Ahead" (June)
Straton, Hillyer H.: "Becoming a Christian" (August)
Tittle, Ernest Fremont: "Can Human Beings be Made Over?" (January)
Versteeg, John M.: "First Aid to God" (September)
Warford, Oswell R.: "Tomorrow's World" (October)
Wishart, Charles F.: "The Eternal Voice Speaks" (June)
Yinger, Homer V.: "Priorities of the Spirit" (February)

Children's Sermons

Foster, Virgil C.: "How Will You Keep Thanksgiving Day?" (November)
Gibson, George M.: "That the Desert Might Bloom" (May)
Johnson, Alvin D.: "God's Ration Book" (September)
Lunger, Harold L.: "Lemuel Q. Lemming" (June)
Patton, Carl S.: "The Boy's Song" (October); "The Kite and the String" (July); "The Peanut Man" (July); "Start from Where You Are" (October)
Simons, James A.: "Don't Shoot the Birds!" (August)
Weist, Carl S.: "Christmas Comes to a Tree" (December)

Pastoral Prayers

Ames, Edward Scribner (May)
Hahn, Herbert W. (December)
Helfenstein, Roy C. (November)
Hudson, Winthrop S. (June)
Jenkins, Burris (January)
Lankler, Ralph C. (February)
Perkins, James Croswell (April)
Ruopp, Harold W. (August)
Tittle, Ernest Fremont (March, July)
Watkins, Gerald (September)
Wright, Bruce S. (October)

Preacher Problems

Chrisman, Lewis H.: "The Preacher's Greatest Problem" (November)
Dunnington, L. L.: "Handles of Power" (August)
Gilkey, Charles W.: "Do Sermons Grow?" (March)
Hall, W. R.: "A Filing System for Preachers" (September)
McKim, Judson J.: "On Dealing with Boards and Committees" (July)
Morrison, James D.: "The Minister's Use of Literature" (April)
Palmer, Albert W.: "Making the Sermon March" (May)
Rich, Mark: "Improving Worship in Rural Churches" (Dec.)
Seidenspinner, Clarence: "Education for Worship" (October)
Stidger, William L.: "Preaching Out of the Overflow" (February)
Swan, Alfred W.: "Training for a Ministry that Ministers" (June)

Book of the Month

Battenhouse, Henry: "This Seed of Faith" (August)
Brightman, Edgar Sheffield: "The Spiritual Life" (November)
Buttrick, George A.: "Prayer" (February)
Ferré, Nels F. S.: "The Christian Faith" (March)
Horton, Walter M.: "Our Eternal Contemporary" (December)
Garnett, A. Campbell: "A Realistic Philosophy of Religion" (October)
Keller, Adolph: "Christian Europe Today" (September); "Religion in Life" (July)
Smith, H. Shelton: "Faith and Nurture" (April)
Sockman, Ralph W.: "The Highway of God" (June)
Tittle, Ernest Fremont: "The Lord's Prayer" (May)
Van Kirk, Walter W.: "Religion and the World of Tomorrow" (January)

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THE PULPIT

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Improving Worship in Rural Churches

By Mark Rich

THE rural environment naturally inspires worship. The countryman lives in the midst of natural prenomena which arouse reverence, awe, wonder, helplessness and fear, which feelings easily lead to worship. Daily the mystery of life and death thrusts itself into the consciousness of country people. The natural things are so fundamental: soil the basic resource for human existence, creation and recreation through which the world is everlastingly born anew, the faithful and simple loyalty of beast to man and the intimate comradeship of the rural home, neighborhood and church. These are great facts of life. Let come prosperity, the growth of vast cities, industrial embellishments beyond anything we have imagined; even then the simple things of the natural world will be the great things.

Moses found God in the bush and Amos found him in the olive groves. The first temples, not made with hands, were God-built sanctuaries of the open air. God is found a reality in the forest cathedral. He speaks in the flaming sunset, through the mystic starry hosts, in storm, flood and drought, and through the rising sun and the day with her various moods and expressions. The Psalms, the Gospels, the great religious poetry of the ages all give us expressions of the countryman's worship of God.

The country church set in an environment so conducive to worship should then set a high standard in the practice of public worship. But, alas! many a town and country church falters and fails in its worship. In the improvement of worship the pastor can take certain decisive steps.

● *Making the Most of the Sunday Service*

The principal Sunday service should be valued as an occasion for true worship. This is not always so. Many a pastor is blind to this opportunity of leading his people into reverent communion with God. This blindness was illustrated in a Sunday morning service in a certain little church. The pastor walked to the pulpit, draped himself over it and asked, "Does anyone have a hymn?" One was called and the people sang. The pastor, noticing that the wall clock was run down, walked across the room, stepped on the seat and back of the pew, and clung against the wall to wind and set the clock. This accomplished, he returned to the pulpit and noisily opened a roll of Sunday school papers, the availability of which he later announced. He asked for another hymn and prayer from the congregation, then went outside for an errand. He returned during the hymn, inquiring whether the prayer had been offered and proceeded with the service.

Such crude procedure is relatively rare, yet those who travel widely report that casual singing, reading the Bible and offering a routine prayer is an all-too-common method of worship in rural churches. Persons practiced in worship revolt at procedures which appear so sacrilegious. But

Mark Rich

ministers behaving thus are not impious. These men do honor and revere God. The trouble is that they do not seek God in public worship. They do not conceive corporate worship to be a noble and inspiring Christian expression. They have no longing for the gentle mood of worship and for the coming of the soul into the very presence of God.

● *God Should be at the Center*

Another negative factor is the still prevalent emphasis upon the centrality of the sermon and the minister. The minister yields too much to the temptation to place himself conspicuously in the center of the service. People are prone to say "he is a good talker" or "he is not a good talker" and to stay home or attend church according to their rating of the minister's preaching ability. Thus, more hinges upon the sermon than upon words read from the Bible, or the "Word of God" speaking to individual souls!

Of all days this is not a time when the minister will stand to say, "Hear my words and look to me." It is a time when he will humbly say: "Look beyond and above. Call upon God, acknowledge him in trust and love. See the cross, the symbol of what Christ was and is and shall be." Thus the minister in worship leads his parishioners to the only source of unfailing spiritual resources. The Sunday service is a time for the worship of Almighty God. No minister can afford to forget that. All he does at this service is a means of leading people to God.

● *Careful Preparation Necessary*

The pastor's spiritual preparation is a first essential to insure a vital and meaningful worship service. His time is set apart for spiritual leadership. He practices the presence of God as he studies, meditates and goes in and out among his people during the week. The Sunday service is the high time of the week. For a minister to come to Sunday service unprepared is far more reprehensible than for a housewife to approach Sunday noon without having made dinner plans. He should have selected his hymns and Scripture lessons, meditated upon the prayer, whether extemporaneous or written, and have arranged the order of service to the last detail. The chores should have been done. Saturday is a day for the preparation of the pastor's spirit. He should have such desire for God that he comes to worship in the spirit of the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

● *Physical Surroundings Should Aid Worship*

A third means of improving worship is by a proper arrangement of the physical surroundings. The architecture of the edifice is of vital importance. There is a shortage of buildings with sanctuaries calling to worship. The colonial churchmen had a clear notion of the purposes of a church edifice. It was a preaching center. But beauty, strength and dignity marked the sanctuary. It called for reverence. With the westward flow of population confusion arose in the minds of churchmen. If not, why then such architectural monstrosities with sanctuaries that bewilder the worshiper? Or the sanctuary may be a bare and matter-of-fact box, without simple beauty, dignity, depth and mystery. The minister cannot usually correct architectural errors of the

past, but he can do the best possible with what is available. Whatever else he may do, let the sanctuary be in order.

Worship will be enhanced by a vase of flowers, and in special circumstances by a picture well selected. Even in non-liturgical churches a cross, a Bible or candles, placed centrally, add significance and beauty.

● *Rural Congregation Distinctive*

A minister will take into consideration conditions peculiar to his congregation. Rural congregations are made up largely of children and young people. This is a glory of the country church. But it often means a restless and noisy congregation. To lead such groups to reverent worship is difficult but by no means impossible.

Pastors in some farming communities complain of the sleepiness of their congregations. Farmers arise early or come to a warm room from a week of heavy outdoor labor. This weakness is not to be condoned yet the cause of it should be understood. The pastor dare not permit the sleepers to discourage him from serving those who remain awake. Proper ventilation helps. Even sleepers postpone their slumbers to more appropriate times when interest is completely awakened.

Rural Protestant people are slow to accept trends toward formalism. They may reject written prayers and litanies as "popish." Hundreds of churches exclusively using swinging, melodious hymns shut ears and hearts to the abiding hymns of the centuries. Many churches face a knotty problem in enlisting a pianist and choir with skill and appreciation to lead a congregation in the practice of worship. The limited repertoire of the choir also precludes the use of great anthems. These facts of the rural church do not discount its worship. They should only determine the tone or the "climate of worship."

● *Proper Order of Service to be Arranged*

The minister has the responsibility of selecting an order of service that is helpful in bringing his people into the mood and reality of worship. How we pastors have explored to find that service which would lend itself best to the worship needs of our people! The orders of service take many forms. Good form takes account of the mind's working, the heart's yearnings and the elements in worship. A faithful study of worship materials will yield a service that satisfies the people's needs. Praise and adoration, penitence, self-examination, sharing and consecration are among the attitudes to be expressed. The service need not be elaborate but it must be genuine with its purpose unmistakable.

The service should proceed with a sense of reverence. From the call to worship there should be a sense of "We are now in the presence of the Lord." Such reverence lends dignity, but in small churches dignity should not become stilted. It should be a calm, quiet, democratic dignity.

The service should proceed promptly, naturally and without delays and discussions. One church has for many years instructed the sexton to ring the bell five minutes before the hour. At the moment the bell ceases ringing, the organist already quietly seated at the console plays the prelude, the service continuing reverently from that moment.

● *Too Much Friendliness May Hamper Worship*

The period of worship must be assiduously guarded against the encroachments of friendly fellowship and visiting. Informality is native to rural life, rural people are a friendly people. It is their desire to have a friendly church, in which the spirit of comradeship is expressed without restraint. Frequently, the Sunday gathering is the only occasion for visiting. Fellowship with people is sometimes substituted for fellowship with God. When the congregation is small, this desire to be friendly may express itself in informality in worship. From informality it is a short step to lack of order and to disorder.

Churches should provide for comradeship. That is a paramount function of the church, but it is poor religion to let the desire to visit shut out the practice of God's presence. Let there be worship, let there be fellowship, but the two should not be indiscriminately mixed so that the result is neither true worship nor unalloyed fellowship. This separation can be accomplished by guarding the moments of worship from announcements, chores and visiting, and by encouraging friendliness and good cheer after service. Some churches will set aside an interval for informal activities.

In my own memory of boyhood days in a country church, two elements stand out clearly: the free, happy after-service comradeship held dear in prospect and in retrospect; and the quiet reverence of a communion service where through the symbolism of the bread and the cup we came face to face with the reality of Jesus' life and death for us.

● *Lay Participation is Vital and Helpful*

There should be a maximum of lay participation. Worship is the corporate expression of the people's dependence on God. No matter how much the minister may worship, nor how conscious he may be of the congregation's need of worship, the service will have a minimum value unless it is the devout and sincere upreach of the congregation.

To make worship a corporate act, the people must be fully instructed in the purpose, method and content of worship. This can be done through midweek classes or meetings, by directed reading, through interpretation and detailed instruction. How much people miss in worship when they have no ability to appreciate or to participate in singing! Every congregation should know a number of hymns that can be sung without dependence on a hymnbook. All should join heartily in responses, litanies, doxologies and other parts of the service.

Every church should set aside at least one service annually conducted by lay people—of course, only after the most careful and painstaking preparation. Corporate worship becomes more joyous and significant when people feel that the Sunday service is their own. In part-time churches where lay workers conduct services, they may be taught to conduct a reverent, helpful service of worship.

● *No Substitute for Worship of God*

A church which neglects worship fails to lead men on one of the principal pathways to God. This applies to the church in town and country as well as in the city. Worship is the deepest expression of a man of faith in his God; it is also the yearning of a soul for God. Worship has evangelizing power. It leads men to God and it keeps men in God.

There is no substitute for the worship of God. Teaching, preaching, fellowship and service; these are needed but they do not displace worship. The country church needs always to point man to the Eternal and help him in humble adoration and humility to find his true self in God.

To think that nothing can be done to improve worship in the rural situation is to yield to unwarranted fatalism. The hundreds of small churches excelling in public worship demonstrate that. Most country churches cannot have all the equipment they desire, but every church can have a satisfying service of worship. The small church without lighting system, without carpeted aisles, vested choir and plush cushions can worship God in the beauty of holiness. Where there is a will there is a way.

One of the most impressive services I ever experienced was in a little, isolated, darkly lighted church in rural Montana. Here the pastor and his wife conducting a service, one at the pulpit and the other at a small folding organ, so brought us into the presence of God that the mood of his coming still lingers. One can no more lose the memory of this service than one forgets the fragrance of clover fields. So it can be in all churches.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

REV. JOHN SUTHERLAND BONNELL, a native of Canada, ministered at St. Andrew's Church, New Brunswick, Westminster Church, Winnipeg, and since 1935 has been minister of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York. He has lectured at Princeton Theological Seminary for the past four years. He has broadcast weekly, October through March, a program entitled "Our Spiritual Life."

A graduate of Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Chicago, Rev. JOHN F. MULHOLLAND pursued postgraduate study in Scotland and Germany. He is now pastor of a rural parish in Round Lake, Minn. Mr. Mulholland writes Sunday school lessons for the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.

Rev. CLARENCE W. KEMPER *has been minister of* First Baptist Church, Denver, Colo., since 1934. Earlier pastorates were in Chicago, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Lansing, Mich., and Charleston, W. Va. He has been prominent in the general work of his denomination.

A native of Russia, Rev. KARL M. CHWOROWSKY early came to America. He received his education in Lutheran schools, has taught at American colleges and universities, and is now minister of the Fourth (Flatbush) Unitarian Church in Brooklyn, N. Y. He is president of the Liberal Ministers' Club of Greater New York.

Rev. HERBERT J. DORAN *received his education at* the University of Oregon and the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago. He has ministered at First Presbyterian Church, Dixon, Ill., for the past six years, and is chairman of the synod's committee on social education and action.

Having received his educational preparation at the University of Richmond, Southern Baptist Seminary, Yale and the University of Edinburgh, Rev. EDWARD H. PRUDEN held his first pastorate at First Baptist Church, Petersburg, Va. For a year he was guest professor at the University of Shanghai, and since 1936 has ministered at First Baptist Church, Washington, D. C. In 1938-39 he was president of the Washington Federation of Churches.

Rev. CARL S. WEIST *is minister of the Community* Church in Mt. Vernon, N. Y., and is the author of *50 Sermon Talks for Boys and Girls.*

Rev. HERBERT W. HAHN *is minister of the Castle* Heights Methodist Church, White Plains, N. Y.

Rev. MARK RICH *is a secretary of town and* country work for the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

PAUL L. STURGES, First Baptist, Pittsfield, Mass. "The Need for a Third Front." Eph. 6:12—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

FRANK L. BROWN, Methodist, Milford, Ohio. "Divine Equipment for an All-Out Drive." Eph. 6:14—"Wear integrity as your coat of mail." (Moffatt)

H. GUY MOORE, Wornell Road Baptist, Kansas City, Mo. "We Are Expendable." John 3:30—"He must increase; I must decrease."

HAROLD H. WRIGHT, First Congregational Unitarian, Fort Collins, Colo. "The Quest for a Christian Standard." John 6:68—"To whom can we go, sir? You have a message of eternal life." (Goodspeed)

ROY A. HALL, Methodist, Loudonville, O. "Our Sons Atoning for Our Sins." Micah 6:7b—"Shall I give . . . the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

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LESLIE C. SANDERS, First Methodist, Morristown, Tenn. "The Christian's Unshaken Realm." Heb. 12:28—"Therefore, let us render thanks that we receive a realm unshaken; and in this way let us worship God acceptably." (Moffatt)

CHARLES A. MADDRY, Leigh St. Methodist, Richmond, Va. "Inner Strength for Outer Struggles." Eph. 3:16—"That he would grant you . . . to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

CHARLES R. HODGES, Greeneville Congregational, Norwich, Conn. "The Armament of Inward Power." Eph. 6:10—"Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

EDWARD A. THOMPSON, First Congregational, Grand Rapids, Mich. "You Stand Revealed." Prov. 23:7—"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

W. P. KRIKORIAN, Christ's Armenian Methodist, Philadelphia, Pa. "The Grand Law of Judgment." 2 Cor. 13:5—"Examine yourselves."

DELBERT L. KINNEY, Lakeview Hts. Reformed, Clifton, N. J. "Rationing the Gospel." Luke 4:43—"And Jesus said unto them, I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent."

ROBERT E. SLAUGHTER, Baptist, East Cleveland, O. "Righteousness and Peace." Isa. 32:17—"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of peace, righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

WITH the invasion and occupation of North Africa by American troops and the great victory over the Japanese fleet at Guadalcanal, the feeling prevails that the war has passed into a new phase. The United Nations have now taken the initiative. By the time this is read there will no doubt have occurred further developments on one or all of the fronts where the opposing forces are joined in combat. Each day brings fresh news of advances which have done much to dispel the heavy anxiety of the long waiting period, but it is too much to expect that there will not also be news of reverses. Yet, on the whole, it seems safe to assume that the various positions of the allied forces are vastly improved and we may dare to hope that there will be a steady advance toward the conclusion of the conflict. What Hitler may at the moment be preparing to do, is anybody's guess. But there can be no doubt that his orders to the small force which he has been able to send into Tunisia to "hold out at all costs" are intended to keep the allies engaged in North Africa so that he may have as much time as possible to prepare an aggressive thrust somewhere. From what place this thrust will come—from Spain, from Southern France, from Italy or Greece, or through Turkey against the British in the Near East—no one can tell. It may prove to be a renewal on a vaster scale than ever of the air attack on the British Isles. But in any event, it seems probable that no great thrust can be undertaken which will not require such a drawing off of the German strength on the Russian front as to let the Red Army break through.

The War Enters A New Phase

The Book of the Month

OUR ETERNAL CONTEMPORARY. *By Walter M. Horton. Harpers. $2.00.*

YOU may put it down as foreordained that when Dr. Horton writes a new book it will be the Book of the Month on this page. I have a peculiar sense of spiritual companionship with him because we seem to be walking in the same direction. Formerly we were both on the road of what was then called liberalism. But it seems to have been a detour, and by following it we have been led back to the main highway of the historical Christian faith. In this book, Dr. Horton undertakes to show the unescapable relevancy of Jesus Christ for the modern world and his eternal relevancy for every age. Christ, he says, is always contemporary. And he says this not as a dogma but as an insight. He says it because he sees it! His interpretation of Christ could be characterized as soundly orthodox, but he arrives at his orthodoxy by an unorthodox route. I like that word "detour" which I have used above. The path of liberalism was not a blind alley (though I must say that it has proved to be one for some liberals). It has proved to be an open road leading back to orthodoxy. The higher criticism, for example, was supposed to be the very essence of heresy, but for Horton it becomes the basis upon which he builds his orthodox view of Jesus. And when you see Jesus through the eyes of this kind of orthodoxy he takes on a reality and a relevance which mere dogmatic orthodoxy cannot convey. Throughout the book there runs this thread: Jesus—then and now. By "then" he refers to the historical scene in which Jesus emerged; by "now" he refers to our contemporary world scene in which Jesus still lives and confronts mankind with no choice save between himself and chaos. Penetrating thought, lucid writing, easy reading—fascinatingly easy—and all informed with a spirit of rare scholarly humility and a lively imagination.

A Thought for the Month

THE Christian gospel is both a story and a body of truth. It is a story of certain events which occurred in history at a particular time and place. The central figure of these events is one Jesus, and the other figures are a small company of men and women who were his friends and disciples. They were the tellers of the story. They went everywhere testifying to the events that had occurred in their company, of which they were witnesses, in which they had participated—how Jesus had taught them, in what manner he had lived, that he had died in ignominy upon a cross, that he had been raised from the dead having appeared to many of them, and had then disappeared into the heavens. They had seen these things with their own eyes, heard them with their own ears. This in outline is the Christian story. It is the heart of the gospel. But it is not all of the gospel. The rest of the gospel is the interpretation of these events. At first, the interpretation was very simple: This Jesus is Israel's Messiah! That was sufficient; for they were Jews and Jesus was a Jew, and those who first heard their story were Jews. But soon Gentiles became interested in the story, and it began to dawn upon the witnesses and believers that the events had a significance far beyond the national hopes of Israel. Paul was the first to see that the story had meaning for all men everywhere. After Paul, others contributed to the development of its universal meaning. And thus the story took on a body of interpretation which we know as the great doctrines of our faith. This body of truth is part of the gospel, and the two parts can never be separated. The story without the interpretation has no meaning. And the meaning without the story has no power. We who believe the story must forever keep on retelling it, and forever keep on renewing its interpretation so that its saving power may be understood and made available to all generations.

A Story and a Body of Truth

Charles Clayton Morrison

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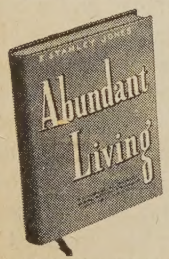

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